

Psychological Theories of Crime

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To really understand why some people commit crimes, it helps to check out the psychological theories. These theories look at how someone's mind works, along with their personality, to figure out what makes them break the law. They're different from theories that just blame society or biology. These theories are all about how your thoughts, emotions, and what you've learned can push you toward crime. It's not just about being born bad. It's a mix of what you're born with and what happens to you. Freud thought that hidden, unresolved issues from childhood could turn into bad behavior. Later on, others thought that if you get rewarded for doing bad things, you'll keep doing them. If someone doesn't learn good morals or how to solve problems, they might be more likely to get into trouble. Things like being impulsive, aggressive, or not being able to control yourself can also play a role. And if you see other people getting away with crime, you might think it's okay too. Looking at all these psychological things not only helps us talk about what causes crime, but also gives us ideas on how to help people turn their lives around by helping them change their thinking and habits. So psychological theories are super important for understanding why people commit crimes and coming up with ways to stop them from doing it again through therapy and support.

Psychological crime theories try to figure out why people commit offenses by looking at their thought processes, personality, and how they grew up. Unlike old-school theories that blame society or genes, psychological ones zoom in on what's happening inside a person's head and heart. They grab ideas from different areas of psychology – like how we grow, who we are, and how we behave. The main idea here is that criminals aren't just naturally bad. Instead, something might be off with how they think, feel, or handle things, which pushes them toward crime. Maybe they can't think straight, don't have a good sense of right and wrong, or struggle to control their emotions.

One thing that is looked at is how early childhood can mold someone's personality and how they act later on. If someone has a rough start – like not getting enough attention, going through trauma, or having parents who are all over the place – it can mess them up. They might not learn how to behave or control themselves properly. Also, if they don't learn how to solve problems or control their impulses when they're young, they might be more likely to get into trouble. Some think and have found that things such as being quick to act, angry, and not caring about others are all connected to bad behavior.

These perspectives also point out how we learn to be criminals. If you get rewarded for doing something bad, you're more likely to do it again. And if you see people getting away with bad stuff – especially people you look up to – you might think it's not so bad. All this shows that people aren't just born criminals.

While there's no single answer to why people commit crimes through psychological perspectives, but they give us a better view of what's going on in someone's head and how that links up with what's happening around them. By focusing on how people think and grow, these theories have shaped how we investigate crime and come up with programs to stop it – by spotting problems early and offering personalized help.

Sigmund Freud had some pretty strong ideas about why people do what they do, and those became the base for looking at crime, he basically thought that your subconscious and what happens to you when you're a kid are what shape you. Freud said that everything is sorted into three parts: the id (your basic wants), the ego (the middleman between your wants and reality), and the superego (your sense of right and wrong). Crime comes about when there is fighting between these three parts. If your basic wants(id) are stronger than your moral compass(superego), then you might end up doing bad things. Freud thought that criminals might have gotten stuck in their development as kids, which means they didn't build a strong superego. That's why they don't feel as guilty as others.

There are also things that you would think of as protection, like suppressing or projecting, which can twist the truth and give you a reason to commit crimes. For example, you could put the blame on others instead of owning up to your mistakes. Freud also thought that trauma or bad parenting can lead to bad behavior later on. If you're neglected or abused as a kid, it can mess you up and make you turn to crime as a way to cope.

Freud's ideas give us insight into why criminals do what they do. Looking at the fighting inside someone's head could be going on, but it's hard to 100% prove his theories. He also focused a lot on sexual stuff as the reason for everything. Still, he pushed crime studies to look past just society and start thinking about what's going on in someone's head. A lot of people try to mix Freud's ideas with other explanations to get the full story on crime.

So, Freud thought that crime comes from internal conflicts that start when you're a kid. These conflicts can create an unbalanced personality. He put a lot of importance on the unconscious mind, but we need more solid research to really figure out how these things cause crime.

Behavioral theories of crime are all about how learning and what's around you can make you commit crimes. These theories basically say that people learn to be criminals through things like when they get rewarded or punished, and when they watch how others do things. Unlike theories that blame it on genes, behavioral ones say that crime happens when people connect certain actions with good results or when they don't have anything stopping them from being bad. If you do something wrong and get something good out of it, or if you don't get punished, you're more likely to do it again.

The main thing here is that what's happening around you plays a big part in whether you keep committing crimes or stop. If punishment is all over the place, it might not do anything to stop bad behavior. This helps explain why crime is different from place to place or person to person. Not only that, but it matters also about who you see. You might do things the way your family or friends do or copy people you see on TV. Especially if they seem awesome in some way.

Looking at this gave ideas on how to interfere, like with behavior programs and reward systems in prisons. These things are supposed to make good behavior stronger while taking away the good stuff that comes from bad actions. Some would say that this fails to see what's going on inside someone's mind.

Even though they aren't perfect, behavioral theories give a way how crime starts and keeps going. Instead of guessing about what's going on inside someone's head, these theories look at what they do and what happens because of it. This makes it easier to figure out crime and create programs that prevent it and help people.

Cognitive development theories stress that how you think shapes how you act. They mean that if your thinking isn't growing the way it should, it can lead to bad behavior. The main idea here is that people go through stages of moral and intellectual growth, which changes how well they understand society, predict outcomes, and control themselves. If someone's thinking gets stuck, it can be hard for them to solve problems, see things from other people's perspectives, or think morally as well, all of which are related to crime. Kohlberg had a framework on morals and stated that offenders will act on the means of avoiding punishment, so instead of society's rules they rather focus on what they will receive.

What's more, criminals often have messed-up thinking patterns. One such pattern is that you see threats where they aren't, you don't think of bad behaviors as bad, and you blame others for what you do. It's like a messed up machine, which can make it easier to justify their actions while turning up the anger during fights. This continues, causing them to miss social cues and also the negative outcomes.

Brain research also shows a correlation between thinking problems and crime. Lack of attention, focus, memory affects their ability to make good choices making them vulnerable to doing things that are rewarding, at the moment short term however may be detrimental in the long run.

To combat this, Programs based on cognitive developmental theory attempt to work alongside those to rectify the mind. These methods aim to correct and restore values which are highly important for criminal desistance and development. Looking at people through these theories shows that it's important to catch and help them early on to stop them from going down the wrong path.

Turns out, some personality traits keep popping up when we talk about why people break the law. It shows there's some psychology to being a criminal. One big one is being impulsive – doing stuff without thinking it through. People who do this have a hard time controlling themselves and want things right away. That can get them into trouble with the law. Also, studies show criminals aren't good at planning things out. And if you're not organized, responsible, or dependable, you're also more likely to get involved in crime. Basically, you're more likely to ignore the rules and not care about what society expects.

Another thing: being all over the place emotionally. If you're anxious, get angry easily, or have big mood swings, you might turn to bad ways of dealing with it, like getting aggressive or using

drugs. When you can't handle your emotions, you're more likely to do something illegal to feel better. Then there's the whole psychopathy thing – lacking empathy, being charming but fake, manipulating people, and just not caring. People look at these traits a lot to see who might become a violent criminal because it messes with their sense of right and wrong and makes it hard to feel bad about hurting others.

It's a mix of who you are and what's around you that really decides if you'll end up committing crimes. If you're already impulsive, being in a bad place like a poor neighborhood or hanging out with the wrong crowd makes it even worse. The numbers show some traits that make you riskier. But, it's not a sure thing because it's all sorts of things mixed together that lead to crime.

Looking at these personality traits and how people handle their emotions is super important. It helps us get why some people are more likely to commit crimes. The examination also points to ways we can help stop people from re-offending by teaching them to control themselves and handle tough situations better.

Social Learning Theory (SLT) says we learn to be criminals the same way we learn anything else: by watching others, copying them, and getting rewarded for it. This is unlike those theories that say it's all about what's inside you or your hidden urges. SLT says your surroundings and who you hang out with make a huge difference. Basically, we learn by watching what others do and what happens to them. So, if you see family, friends, or even people on TV getting away with crime or even getting something good out of it, you might start thinking it's okay to do it too. It says you have to pay attention, remember what you saw, be able to do it yourself, and want to do it.

Lots of studies show SLT works when it comes to explaining why young people and adults commit crimes. The idea is, if you're around people who think crime is okay, you're more likely to pick up those ideas too. Stuff like getting money or looking cool without getting caught makes those behaviors stick.

SLT even looks at how this changes as you grow up. Hanging around bad influences when you're young can set you on a path toward being a repeat offender. It also says it goes both ways – you choose your surroundings, but they also change you.

SLT is a way of looking at things. It puts together psychology and your surroundings. That makes it useful for figuring out how to stop crime by changing those surroundings and showing people how to be good role models. As far as crime goes, SLT is still a good way to explain how it spreads through society instead of just blaming it on biology or what's going on in someone's head.

So, what does all this mean for stopping crime and helping people turn their lives around? Knowing about how criminals think, act, and what their personalities are like allows us to create programs that can help them avoid re-offending and start doing good things. One way is to change how they think and make decisions, which can lead to criminal behavior. By helping them think differently, criminals can learn how to solve problems and control their impulses so

they can fit back into society. Using social learning theory means changing their surroundings by finding them good role models and rewarding them for good behavior. This can stop young people from becoming criminals by changing who they hang out with and having parents keep a closer eye on them.

Programs that work on personality traits try to change things like impulsiveness and aggression, which are often linked to crime. Methods like therapy and anger management can help people control their emotions and be less violent. It's important to remember that not all criminals are the same. Early intervention programs that focus on at-risk kids can also help stop them from becoming criminals by helping them form good relationships and control themselves.

We can't just look at treating individuals; we also need to look at the big picture. Studies show we should have mental health services in prisons to treat problems that could make criminal behavior worse. We can also educate the public to get rid of the stigma of getting help for behavioral issues. The best way to reduce crime is to combine psychology with social support.

Using psychological theories in rehabilitation programs allows us to manage offenders better by targeting the causes of their behavior, not just the symptoms. Preventive measures can also help society be tougher against future crime. When we connect what we know with how we do things, psychology becomes a key part of our criminal justice system.

Looking at psychological theories of crime gives us a deep insight into why people commit offenses. Theories suggest bad behavior comes from hidden issues and childhood experiences and also emphasize that learned behaviors are from conditioning. Experts on how people grow and think point out that being slow to develop in those areas can make people more likely to commit crimes. Research finds that things like being impulsive, aggressive, and having low self-control are big signs that someone might commit crimes. All these ideas together show that crime is complicated.

Using these ideas together has a big impact on rehabilitation and prevention. Fitting therapy to target problems and changing wrong ways of thinking or adjusting learned behaviors can make treatment better. Using assessments to find at-risk youth allows for preventative methods that reduce their risk of becoming repeat offenders. While we may never fully understand crime with one theory, by understanding theories, conditioning, growth, and social learning helps to create policies to lower the rates of repeated offenses. Research and advancement is critical for the criminal justice system.

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